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THE

WINTER EVENING FIRESIDE.

BOSTON:
W. D. TICKNOR & CO.
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ADVERTISEMENT.

Beside the incongruity of the title with the season of the year, the writer cannot but be aware of the uncertainty of attempting a publication of this character in this country, where the writings of our new writers are generally received with coldness and distrust, and those of foreigners with eagerness and avidity. The national policy discourages manufactures at home for the sake of the products of foreign skill. The same rule is applied to literature. An American who has the will to contribute to letters, and seeks hearers among his own countrymen, must forego his purpose, unless he have a private fortune, which will enable him to write, whether the people hear or forbear, and must prostitute his talents by editing a newspaper, bury himself alive in one of the learned professions, engage in some occupation that will leave but a few wearisome hours for his chosen pursuit, which, certainly, as much as any other, demands the undivided energies of the mind, or turn Democrat and seek office. Hence it is not a matter of surprise, that nearly all the permanently valuable literary works that have been produced by Americans

have been written by men of independent fortunes, and that many that have been written by others have been fostered under more genial and gracious influences than can be found in America. We cannot have, and we desire not to have, a national literature, so long as we regard the pursuit of letters as an aristocratical amusement merely, and not as an honorable calling. Our great injustice towards foreign authors, by which we are enabled to flood the land with their unpaid for productions, is severely recompensed by the crushing of native talent, which would otherwise be exerted.

Men of mature age are now living among us, who have fine natural powers worthy of the admiration of all readers, who, being sustained by no popular sympathy, delight their private friends with those powers which were meant to charm the world. Our public allows the author of "The Idle Man" to go in silence to the grave. He endeavored to speak, but the public pressed both hands upon his lips, and cried "We will not hear thee." Should the writer be silenced in the same way, his pride would be flattered at the expense of his purse. There is a fair field in America for many avocations, but literature and art are not heartily cherished. Whoever makes literature his only pursuit is almost as much out of place in the United States as a goldsmith would be in the wilds of Oregon. If an American succeeds in literary pursuits abroad, his country vociferously claims him as hers, and complains of his want of national feeling; as a father, who, though having enough and to spare, should withhold bread from a helpless child, and compel him to seek a home among strangers,

and then should wonder why his son left his father's house, and should lament the decay of filial affection. "Who reads an American book," might often be answered, *the English read it first*, and if John Bull condemns it, brother Jonathan says that "he never thought that the book was worth a moment's attention;" and, if, on the contrary, John Bull likes it, brother Jonathan goes quietly to the nearest bookstore and buys a copy, not without wondering why Americans write books, when English ones reprinted can be bought so much cheaper, goes home, takes a seat, rubs his eyes, puts on his spectacles, takes up the book, reads it slowly through, and, although, before, he had not, perhaps, even looked inside its covers, exclaims, when he has finished it, with an air of profound originality, "John Bull's opinion agrees precisely with mine;—I always thought that the book was a good one,"—and then he adds in a lower tone, "still, I think that the price is rather high."

The writer here commences this serial work, having few hopes of its success, but, anticipating that the coldness of its reception will confirm his conviction, that, if he would devote himself to literature, he must hope to find more favorable ears than those of his countrymen.

These few paragraphs have been written with the consciousness that some one, at whatever sacrifice of personal feeling, should speak a little wholesome truth about a matter, concerning which there is in the community much blindness; and it is better that it should be spoken by an American, since, if foreigners tell us of our faults, however good-naturedly, we fly into a passion, and complain of European

prejudices. Warmer and kinder friends than the writer has found here, he nowhere expects to find, but he professes to have some independence of spirit, and a wish to exercise himself in a lawful trade—and such is literature. He shall hold out his hand, until it be grasped, if it be only for his importunity. It is not always one's duty to decline giving even a word or a look of appeal, either for himself, or for others.

W. G. D.

Cambridge, August, 1847.

THE WINTER EVENING FIRESIDE.

I desire to introduce to your acquaintance, gentle readers, a select party of friends who are wont to assemble, to amuse and instruct their minds, at the house of a kind-hearted, venerable, Christian merchant, who has benevolently opened his doors for the praiseworthy purpose. He is well nigh threescore years of age, but retains much youthful vivacity, with which he delights all who come within the circle of his cheerful fireside. He has found time, whilst engaged in his calling, to cultivate his mind by reading, study and reflection. Thus, he is not one of those who can be eloquent upon the current prices of goods in the market, and describe the best way of keeping accounts, with the ardor of a mathematician in solving a problem, but whose eyes become vacant, and whose nodding heads betray their listnessness, when any subject is introduced, that lies above the domain of pounds, shillings and pence. On the contrary, he loves intellectual society, and has gathered about him a few friends, who are of like mind with himself. He is very cheerful, and loves a good-natured repartee, or a witty turn of expression, but he makes a

distinction between these and mere vanity and insipidity. He lives in his rural retreat, which he seldom leaves for the city, and then he returns to it as soon as possible, because he wishes to pass the few years or days that may be left to him in the improvement of his mind and heart. He has given over his business into the hands of his sons, who follow in their father's steps, and show no less tact in business, for being men of enlarged minds and liberal training. His benevolence makes the whole region about him rejoice, and he never walks abroad without being cheered by the smiles of those who have formerly received benefits from him, or who know and respect his worth. The principles of religion guided him in his mercantile pursuits, and now, in his declining age, they throw a peculiar beauty around his hoary head. He never intentionally overreached his neighbors, and, although, accordingly, he has not, in many cases, gained so much as otherwise he might have done, he has attained more in reputation than he has lost in money. He never rejoiced in any man's affliction, but he has often said that he never felt that Divine justice is more plainly exemplified upon earth, than when a dealer, who has kept on hand a storehouse of wheat, for the sake of gaining eventually an exorbitant price, when his neighbors were starving to death, is himself reduced, by ruinous traffic, to the borders of starvation.

The upright and enlightened merchant, whose love of gain stifles not his sympathies, and disturbs not his progress in virtue and knowledge, is one of the most useful and honorable of men. He contributes greatly to encourage good-feeling and a sense of mutual de-

pendence, which are strong safeguards of international peace. He gives and gains at the same time, and makes strangers friends. His pursuit has been the source of many evils, but so has been every vocation of man. The scholar, though engaged upon matters, which, one would think, would lift him above jealousy and prejudice, has often been the subject and the victim of both. One pursues power and another renown too eagerly, and, at length, destroy themselves, and injure their fellow-men; yet power and renown, if sought for the sake of good, are worthy goals of ambition, and so wealth, if obtained by one, who has sought it, not to improve himself alone in respect of social, moral and mental condition, is of good account. The upright and generous merchant is esteemed by all, whether he gain much or little. At his death he is mourned as a good citizen and worthy man, and his name is long cherished in the grateful hearts of the community. The mere sharper, however, whose only aim is to get money, and to spend or keep it for himself alone, however wealthy he may be, is saluted, perhaps, in the street, with the cold nod of outward respect, and is courted by the smiles and compliments of those who hope one day to enjoy his property, but he is not beloved or esteemed in the heart. He may be followed to the grave by a pompous funeral train, but there all thoughts of him die, and he is remembered no more.

The mansion of our wise entertainer is in a lovely district upon the bank of a river. Declining from the house to the water is a sloping lawn, which in summer revels in delightful green, and in winter glistens with its white mantle in the sun. The trees of a thick

forest, that extends as far as the eye can see, on either side, on the opposite bank of the river, that winds along in many tiny bays and little coves, are reflected in the days of heat in the clear stream below. Their leaves then move as if bathing in the cool element, and rejoicing in the gentle sport; but, when the cold days approach, they wither sadly away, and the trees stretch forth their stiff arms, covered with icicles, that glisten in the clear sun like every kind of precious gems. A party of youthful skaters may be seen, of a holiday afternoon, gliding rapidly along their silvery path, while their cheeks redden in the healthful exercise, their spirits are animated by the bracing air, and their shrill voices of delight echo against the banks of the river and the walls of the house, as though a thousand fairies were at their jocund games. Of a sharp, cold night, one would be in doubt which shone the brightest, the stars that twinkle far up in the sky, or those that answer to them in the ice below. The moon, when she has risen high on her nocturnal march, throws around the whole scene a magical beauty, which is not surpassed by the glory of a clear summer night. Sometimes the merry voices of the skaters give place to the loud wail of the wind, the snow falls thick and fast upon the earth and river, masses of black cloud rush so rapidly through the sky, that the stars, occasionally seen through their interstices, seem like meteors flashing out upon the angry firmament;—and the trees shake off their glittering gems, to contend with the furious elements, and roll this way and that, like vessels laboring in the waves of the ocean. The mind is awed by the grandeur of the scene, and one feels

how severe as well as mild are the mysterious powers of nature. In the evening, when the winter day is over, and the party of friends assemble, as they do once in the week, in the well-filled library of the hospitable mansion, where a bright fire gladdens the room, the face of the venerable merchant glows with animation, and he salutes one after another of his visitors as they come in, with a winning smile that expresses the kindness of his heart, and he shakes the hand of each with a cordiality that admits no doubt of his welcome. Whatever be the weather without, cheerfulness is within.

His lady sometimes joins the party, and her unassuming deportment, mingled with the sedate dignity that becomes her matronly years, and the mild grace with which her casual remarks are made, win the sincere respect of her delighted auditors. She makes no pretensions to intellectual superiority, and if ever she uses a little quiet scorn, it is only when she sees a lady vain of her mental accomplishments. She has an excellent natural taste, and her opinions always gain attention if not concurrence.

A lady who has an acquaintance with graceful literature moves not from her sphere, and must be a pleasant companion; but what man, when, in the evening he enters his family circle, to be refreshed and cheered by easy converse, would care to be saluted, not with pleasant smiles and gentle words, that show a warm and affectionate heart, but with a cold look of stern abstraction, and the question proposed with all the preciseness of Socratic disputation, "Well, Sir, what do you think of the Pythagorean system of philosophy?"

Sometimes there sits by the mother's side a youthful daughter, whose cheeks tinged with delicate bloom, and whose full, dark eyes, radiant with intelligence and spirit, make the beholder glad with gazing on her lovely face, while her graceful mien, her speech, musical as a silver bell, displaying now and then exquisite thoughts, set in choicest expression, that flash resplendently upon the listener's mind, charm every one at the happy fireside. All that is sweet and delightful in nature, the glories of each gorgeous season, serene contemplation amid scenes of rural peacefulness, the careful reading of the best and purest books, the cheerful and now pensive music of the voice and harp, ignorance of the gay world, and mild, parental love that has watched each dawning trait of the mind and heart, and checked or nurtured it with constant care, have made her a fair exemplar of young female loveliness, while her seeming unconsciousness of being comely in person or attractive in mind, make her the more beloved and beautiful. From earliest childhood to the period of now dawning maturity, the guiding hand of the Church has led her willing steps through all the changes of the Christian year, and has infused into her mind a love of her solemn services, and of the religion enshrined within them. She is the almoner of her parent's bounty among the neighboring poor, who regard her coming step as that of an angel visitant, and whose eyes fill with tears of grateful joy, as they look on that fair young face, beaming with health and beauty, and adorned with that endearing, sweet expression, which the performance of well-known duty impresses upon the countenance. Her hearty saluta-

tion, remembered with pleasure in the ear, when the voice itself is still, her words of consolation, full of the wisdom of age, yet uttered with the simplicity of a little child, the service of her hands given, when it is needed, for a sufferer's comfort, her sunny smiles, that warm the coldest heart, all show how amiable are the errands of mercy.

How lovely is early piety. When the sacred truths of religion make the youthful heart beat with the pulsations of immortal life, and conscious of allegiance to the Lord of heaven and earth, fill it with the high sense of Christian duty, and bear the spirit upward and onward, like the morning sun, to dispel many a cloud from the face of sorrow, and to illume many a dark abode with the radiance of heaven, the angels look down admiringly from their residence of ineffable light, and by divine commission overshadow with their wings the mortal creature, keeping away the glare of a fantastic world, and, by their mysterious power making known their guardian presence, whisper sweet thoughts into the patient ear, and breathe into the enraptured soul bright hopes of endless joy.

It is time that I should speak of the party who assemble at the Winter Evening Fireside. The rector of the parish is usually present. He believes that the Church of England is the best branch of the Catholic Church, in very many respects, though he admits, that, practically, there is much to rectify and to amend. He belongs to the defensive portion of the Church; not that he questions the acts or motives of those who are aggressive upon forms of error, but he thinks that to every disposition belongs an appropriate duty, and that his leads him to put on the armor of

defence, rather than to take in hand the weapons of attack. He passes his life in the secluded, but most noble duties of a Christian pastor. He has but one living, and, although, as a man of acknowledged ability and worth, he might easily reap the income of more, he declines doing so, because he cannot believe that the Church of England is so destitute of faithful men, as to require the apostolic precept, "The laborer is worthy of his hire," to be read, one laborer is worthy of the hire of many. He engages in exercises that invigorate the frame, and refresh the mind, without distracting wholly his attention from the duties of his sacred calling. He never joins in the chase; for he has compared together the best commentators upon the New Testament, both the fathers of the Church, and more recent divines, and has reflected long and patiently upon the matter, but cannot satisfy himself that the injunction, "Feed my lambs," should be understood as a command to hunt foxes.

He has a practice, which is certainly worthy of imitation. When severe pastoral duties have occupied his whole attention during the week, he never presents to his people the hasty compound of a Saturday evening's preparation, but reads to them a plain, practical sermon from Barrow, or a glowing one from Jeremy Taylor. Many of his parish are sensible enough to know, and the rest have the charity to believe, that a man with a jaded mind cannot write intellectual, persuasive discourses, that shall enchain thought and feeling, and are gratified rather than annoyed by their rector's course in this respect. They say truly, that if a man will hear for the hundredth time with renewed delight a drama that

represents scenes and characters of time only, why should not discourses, full of the spirit of immortal truth, composed by the masters of sacred eloquence, be read again and again for the improvement of a congregation?

His people all regard him with esteem and love. His mind and manners having received the highest culture, he is equal to the instruction of all classes. Indeed, the man of superior refinement will delight with his easy gracefulness the peasantry by the wayside, and the glittering assembly of a royal court. The simplicity of nature and the highest cultivation are alike affected by true courtesy, and each can equally well detect its absence, whilst the man who is half-trained only, in mental discipline or in politeness of manner, will be at home nowhere; but will displease some by his fawning air, and others by his haughtiness. Hence our clergyman, by his winning ways and easy adaptation of himself to the circumstances in which he may be placed, has a wonderful influence over his people, which a heart, deeply imbued with the spirit of his faith, leads him to use for the highest and noblest purposes. His eloquence in the pulpit so combines plain good sense with a glowing fancy and a zeal for truth, that one knows not by which he is most affected in his discourses, their practical force upon the mind and heart, or their simple beauty of expression. Reason and imagination so inform each other in his efforts, that his arguments are not dry, his rhetoric flighty or his appeals without a soul, but the hearer is at the same time pleased and persuaded.

He deems it the highest privilege of his calling to nurture the young in the principles and practice of

religion, and he endeavors, by kind counsel, to direct aright their ways and thoughts, to excite and cherish loyalty to the Christian Church, and to defend them with its powerful shield. The vicious and profane he rebukes with so much firmness and yet so calmly, as one who is conscious of his own imperfections, that he generally brings them to thoughtfulness and reformation. He never proselytes among those who are not of his communion, but, by the serene beauty of his Christian example, and his loveliness of deportment, gains the sincere tribute of esteem for himself, if not of attachment for his church.

Although he regrets that the voice of the Church is not definitively uttered at the present day by a solemn convocation, he endeavors faithfully to ascertain it by a diligent comparison of the chief authorities. To the sacred Scriptures he gives his best and most earnest attention. The sound doctrine, the practical wisdom, the conservative principles, the simple, thoughtful eloquence, with which abound the writings of the divines of the Church of England, are frequently the subject of his thoughtful reading and meditation. The pages of the discreet and excellent Hooker, the advocate of the whole Church, and not of any division of it, he especially studies as an exposition of faith and discipline.

Another friend, who joins the circle, is an elderly gentleman, who, for many years, has devoted himself to antiquarian pursuits. He cares more for the races that have died, than for living men about him. Any thing recommended to his notice because it is new, he passes by without a look or a word, but when any thing old is presented to him, his eyes glisten, and

his trembling lips speak his joyful excitement. The only periodical of the day which he condescends to read is the Retrospective Journal. He thinks that all the intellect which the world has ever seen is to be found in days long past. He loves to pore over old books, and regards an author's antiquity as the surest proof of his excellence. Many a poor author, could he break the silence of the grave, would most humbly thank him, whose diligent search into the abyss of forgotten literature has found some musty volume which was unnoticed at its first appearance, but which is so set off by the halo of antiquity, as to draw towards it a brief regard. Our antiquary never presumes to conjecture what will be, seldom to consider what is, but delights to imagine what has been. He dresses in rusty black, because it implies age. He would prefer to inhabit some old baronial castle, with bats and owls for his companions, than to live in the royal palace, surrounded by gay courtiers. His love of what is old overcomes even his loyalty, and, hence, although not a Puritan, he values a button of one of Oliver Cromwell's coats more than he would esteem one of Victoria's crown jewels. He prefers a copper coin, stamped in Queen Elizabeth's day, to a guinea fresh from the mint. He is occasionally made the sport of thoughtless persons, who palm off upon him, as original specimens, ingeniously constructed imitations, of ancient workmanship. The old man is very easy of belief respecting the past, but very incredulous with regard to the present. A wag in the neighborhood once remarked, that the antiquary was doubtful of his own personality, for that, being a matter of the present moment, was very questionable.

He is an excellent classical scholar, as may be supposed. He once wrote a very learned paper on the various uses of the Latin word "itaque," and he is said to have read through the works of Cicero, to ascertain the different meanings of the phrase "necesse est," when used with the subjunctive mode. The results of his examination he expressed in a very long essay, which he offered to one of our chief booksellers for publication, but was coldly repulsed by the remark that the essay would be uninteresting to general renders, and that scholars were commonly too poor to buy such works. The disappointed man still kept his treatise by him, waiting for the time when classical learning shall be more widely appreciated, and his brow be adorned with the laurels of scolastic fame.

His house is a quaint building, full of all the oddities of which an antiquarian fancy can conceive. He has a few vases of true Etruscan origin, mixed with many that are of doubtful genuineness, representations in plaster of every famous temple or theatre of antiquity, and busts of all the great men, and maps of distinguished battles, in which was displayed ancient valor. These he has carefully studied in connection with the old writers about them, and he loves to describe, for the entertainment of his visitors, how Cæsar gained this battle, how the power of Xerxes was withstood, and how manfully Scipio met the onset of his foe. His lively eye follows every motion, and a little wand, directed by his busy fingers, points out every remarkable locality.

His disposition is lively and cheerful, and he is esteemed as an agreeable companion. He has collected together a vast number of incidents about ancient

times, and these, together with the oftentimes valuable information which he is able to give, afford pleasure and improvement to his friends. He heartily enjoys the society where his tastes and opinions are respected. Whenever, in any company in which he may be, any pleasant or witty remark is made, he stamps with both feet upon the floor, lifts up both hands, and while a smile of satisfaction spreads over his features, cries out, "bless me, I wish that I had said that."

An unjust prejudice sometimes regards the antiquary as a man actuated by mere idle curiosity. The desire of knowing accurately about events, places and manners of past days, impels him to diligence in his pursuit, and, since the attainment of such knowledge may in a thousand ways benefit the world, the antiquary should not be regarded as engaged in worthless labors. Every department of literature is indebted to him. The historian, if not himself an antiquary, very greatly depends upon his aid in collating ancient records. A sort of instinct enables the delver into the past to collect, from various sources, materials to supply or to confirm the works of men more ambitious in the paths of literature. Biography owes more, perhaps, than history, to the labors of the antiquary, who delights especially in procuring incidents of personal history. The historian busies himself about great men, only inasmuch as they have produced or guided great events, and had an influence upon society at large, whilst the biographer presents remarkable events only because of their bearing upon the private character which he describes. The historian deals with men as actors; the biographer with

actors as men. Thus the antiquary favors that delightful department of literature, which displays the distinguished men of ancient times in all the relations of life. The poet relies upon the antiquary for the collection of many beautiful legends and romances which enlarge the field of his illustration, or afford subjects to be wrought into the graceful forms and figures of poetry. The man, who has, as deeply as any one, impressed the popular fancy of the present century, was himself a distinguished antiquary, and thus is accounted for much of Sir Walter Scott's success. His strong imagination threw a coloring, sombre or bright, over the ancient customs and history of his native land; and from the rude materials before him, he fashioned many beautiful figures, like glowing statuary from the rough quarry.

The highly amusing memoirs that have been published of Mr. Oldbuck of Monkbarns, have somewhat contributed, perhaps, to bring ridicule upon antiquaries, and yet no result could have been farther from the intention of the excellent gentleman who composed them. But those who laugh at the unkind pranks and practical jokes, which a certain Edie Ochiltree, of very doubtful reputation, at the best, played at the expense of this worthy antiquary, of whom I have spoken, should beware lest they be found wanting in respect towards a most honorable class of individuals.

Another of the visitors is a man of a philosophical turn of mind, who has read the works of the best writers in his chosen branch of study with a deep and thoughtful attention. He is not one of those geniuses who complain of study and reading as obstacles in the way of original thought. He often smiles when

he hears men who pride themselves upon their powers of reflection, state opinions with the bold air of having said what no one ever thought of, and thinks within himself that what seems to them to be so profound and new may be found expressed in a thousand books. He says, that, when his mind was first directed towards philosophical studies, he felt as though he were entering a field, where, at every step, he should find some new thing that had escaped the observation of every one who had examined the ground before him. His pulse beat high at his prospect of the discoveries which he was about to make in the science of the mind. His mortification was great, to find oftentimes that thoughts, which were perfectly new to him, and which he supposed would be equally so to every one else, had been more profoundly expressed by others, and more variously applied. His pride of intellect was soon humbled, and he was convinced that the search after wholly new ideas is very much like trying to discover new elements of nature, and that the highest ambition of the philosopher must be content with ascertaining, perhaps, some new application of old and well-known truths. The effect of this wholesome discipline has been to throw over his disposition a modest, Attic grace, which makes him seem, while uttering his best and noblest thoughts, to be merely recalling ideas to the recollection of his friends, who, in fact, generally hear them from his lips with the admiring surprise with which one looks for the first time upon the beautiful works of creative art.

He is conscious of the peculiar difficulties to be encountered by one who wishes to understand the working of the wondrous machine of thought, such as the

firm and constant concentration of the mind upon a single point, the painful notice of minute differences and agreements, the pursuit of a primary principle through intricacies without number. But, in solving intellectual problems, no difficulty appears to him so great as that of avoiding the play of the fancy and of remaining sternly under the guidance of pure reason. He regards the action of the imagination, whilst one is engaged in a philosophical exercise, as being really as mischievous, though not, perhaps, so manifestly as would be the conduct of a mathematician, who, being employed about an astronomical calculation, should become vexed with the perpetual recurrence of sines and cosines, and should give himself up to the sway of his fancy, and interweave her airy gossamer with the threads of exact demonstration. He admits that there are poetical associations about philosophy, as about mathematics. It startles the imagination to consider, that, by the use of simple signs, one may calculate the motions of the universe of stars, and, by some fixed principles, may approximate to the solution of the vast problems of the human soul, and may learn the sources and the means of intellectual action. Nevertheless, the astronomer must refuse to hear the "music of the spheres," which entrances the poet's soul, and the mental philosopher must regard a glittering fancy as a marshy light that leads travellers astray. Hence, although he acknowledges that there is much that is fascinating in modern transcendentalism, yet to dignify it, a scheme "of imagination all compact," by the name of philosophy, or to give it a place amongst accredited systems, he feels, would be itself an act of the imagination, since

it is by this faculty, according to the great poet, that we give to "airy nothing a local habitation and a name." He pictures to himself a Transcendentalist as a man, with the robes of the Academy half off his shoulders, with wild, staring eyes, and a pallid face, who now walks upon the ground, then suddenly stops, then lifts up both arms, as if about to fly, and, finding that he cannot succeed, goes quietly on his way again; who prefers the fanciful German mind to the sound and sober English; who talks incoherently about *dualities* and *idealities*, and when he happens to think, calls himself inspired;—in short, a philosopher run mad.

The philosopher may, indeed, be a poet, but when he seeks the quiet walks of philosophy, he must hang his harp upon the willow, and have a care, lest the beauty of the landscape, that stretches out before him, the murmur of streamlets, that flow calmly by, or the fragrance of flowers, that line his pathway, withdraw his mind from unbending allegiance to the reason alone. He cannot, indeed, otherwise express his ideas than by figures of speech, but let his thoughts, however clothed, appeal to the calm and serene judgment of those who regard him as their intellectual teacher. The poet is, as it were, the passive recipient of outward impressions, the philosopher earnestly strives for his thoughts. It is easy and delightful to imagine; it is painful and wearisome to reason. The poet's mind is a crucible of resplendent molten silver, that reflects upon its face with new beauty outward forms in figures that are intangible, but the philosopher's mind is the hard, rough graver

of the silversmith, which, being carefully wielded, elaborates substantial figures.

Our friend leads an intense intellectual life, and, accordingly, he finds food for thought not in books alone, but in every object of the external world, on which he gazes with the interest of one who seeks to discover cause and effect in all things. At every step a new wonder meets him. Life, in its various forms; in the bird that warbles in his ear, in the tree that lifts its foliage to the sun, and in man himself, is to him full of startling mystery; nor is death less so, when the song of the bird is hushed, when the leaves decay, and when the fire of the human eye is quenched. Those spiritual agencies, which lie beneath all created forms, so potent and manifest in their effects, yet so unappreciable by any finite sense, awaken his deepest thoughts, and lead him on through many a mental labyrinth, where he loses himself again and again, and, where, when he thinks that he has found the clear pathway, he is but drawn more and more into the perplexing maze. When he considers the wonders of humanity, he shrinks from saying, *Who can find out God?* but, in the depths of his humility at being unable to explain questions which a wayside walk suggests, he exclaims, with trembling lips, *Who can even find out man, and the wonders of his intellectual being?* He unites Christian faith with his pursuit, and since there is so much that is mysterious in philosophy, his reason persuades him, independently of the fact, that mysteries both deep and sublime are to be found in religion.

I now present to your notice a man, whose poetical temperament makes him welcome at the evening

fireside. He is of middle age, and has borne through life many a sorrow, which tinges with melancholy a face which would otherwise express but the most joyful enthusiasm. Yet pleasant words and looks always greet his friends, who are affected by the severity of discipline which they know that he has experienced, and by the amiability of spirit which will not allow him to disturb the happiness of others. In his deportment is always manifest a delightful serenity. Even when he becomes excited by some glowing theme of discourse, his presence of mind never deserts him, but he maintains a majestic calmness of demeanor, which is infinitely more impressive than the wildest outbreak of furious passion, which alone, in the opinion of some, shows an imaginative disposition. He is conversant with the highest themes of poetry, not only with the forms of outward nature, but with the highest expressions of intellectual beauty and grandeur. The notion that the poetical faculty is injured by the refinements of social life, and by generous culture, he rejects as being untrue, alike in reason and in fact. He affirms with truth, that our faculties, being capable of indefinite improvement, are evidently meant to be so improved, but, that, if the imagination, one of our noblest powers, be more developed in a rude than in an enlightened soul, then we need not strive for its improvement, and thus the law of progress, one of the highest that rule the spiritual creation, must be, in one of its most important applications, reversed. The influence of the imagination refines and exalts the soul, and, if a judgment may be formed from this most manifest effect, we may conclude that savages have been almost unmoved by

scenes of wild sublimity or of serene and quiet beauty, that would strongly impress a cultivated mind. Where the senses have been educated, the moral nature been refined by the sympathies of social life, and the hopes of the soul been awakened, the imagination is most powerfully affected.

> "The rill is tuneless to his ear who feels
> No harmony within; the south wind steals
> As silent as unseen amongst the leaves.
> Who has no inward beauty, none perceives,
> Though all around be beautiful."

He has a high sense of the vocation of the bard. "The Poets," he says, "are a royal race. The glorious reign of Queen Elizabeth is no more hers than that of William Shakespeare. There lived a king in England, at the time of the Commonwealth, who passed among men as 'one Mr. Milton'; and, even now, in the north of the same island, lives a king, who, from his humble cottage near lake Windermere, extends a sceptre more potent than Victoria's from her proudest palace. Staunch republicans pay allegiance to him, and on his brow is set a diadem, radiant, not with gems and gold, but with living light. When the poet's form has become dust, his spirit, yet present in his works, exercises still more powerful sway over the minds of men. As many a person, who on earth was unknown beyond his narrow circle, may, in the future world, be admired by myriads of celestial intelligences, so the memory of the poet, whether his brow were adorned or not with an emerald crown, abides for ever, and glows with intensest lustre, when imperial glory has passed away.

Men gaze with exultation upon the sun, when he first rises majestically above the horizon, yet, afterwards, they rejoice quietly and almost unconsciously in his animating beams; and, when the gladsome ecstasy is over, with which the power of the great Poet is first acknowledged, men's minds yield spontaneously to the gentle influence, which, informing them with intellectual warmth, produces many a glowing thought and beautiful reflection, as the genial solar heat causes to spring forth from the green earth the fairest fruits and flowers."

He cannot agree with those, who seem to think that the day of great poets is almost over, and that coming time may not produce as high poetical creations, as those, that, in time past, have afforded sweet delight. "The face of nature," he says, "is yearly clad with as lovely verdure, and in the heart of the forest as lofty trees lift their summits to the skies, as in days gone by; the "human face divine" still glows with life and beauty; and it is unreasonable to suppose that, in God's perpetual exercise of new creative power, intelligence alone may fail, and that as lofty minds, as are enshrined in classic associations, may not again be clothed with mortality. If Providence has allowed distinguished minds to flourish in the midst of Pagan superstition, we may conclude that he also has permitted and will again permit them to appear under the more inspiring and genial influences of the Christian faith. He has a low notion of Almightiness who thinks that the world may never add to the circle of her greatest bards as glorious names as Homer, Virgil, Shakespeare and Milton. History, since the time of Shakespeare, is as full of incidents,

worthy of dramatic representation, as that before him. The long contests of the House of Stuart with the people of England, and of George the third, with his American colonies, are more significant, more grand and impressive, than the quarrels of the Red and White Roses. The life and death of the unhappy Charles afford a subject for a most exciting and affecting tragedy. If the dramatic Muse would present scenes of blood, before which the heart of the wife of Macbeth would quail, the pages of French history, before the Empire, are open; and the career of Napoleon Bonaparte himself is more full of various events, of loftiness and lowliness, and ends more ignobly, more solemnly than the life of Richard the third. Or, if she would present scenes of quiet loveliness, and illustrations of the gentle sympathies of life, the world is as beautiful as ever, and the human heart is not yet dead. The fairies may have deserted their thrones among the roses, but modern fancy delights to give to every flower its province in the domain of sentiment; and guardian angels still watch the path of life. Mercy is as amiable, self-devotion is as sublime, love is as refining and subduing, wit is as delightful, beauty is as enchanting now, as when the Bard of Avon lived. The success of a living writer shows that the simple expression and the deep appreciation of natural affections have not been destroyed. May we not hope that, sooner or later, some poet may arise and gild the themes of dramatic song about him with his magic fancy, and make the world weep and smile at his triumphant will?

As regards epic poetry, too, some men complain with pensive faces, that there can be no more epic

poems, as if a master-mind could not make a subject, if one were not ready at his hand: and, yet, they say thus, when they must needs know, that nobler events than was the seige of Troy, have happened since Homer sang; that associations connected with the founding of other nations, are more glorious than those that have made Virgil's name immortal; that Milton has sung but half this majestic theme. Here, again, the only real difficulty is, to find the epic poet. Men may spin their subtile reasons, but, let there be an epic poet, and all transcendental difficulties in the way of another epic poem would vanish into the same thin air, from which they sprung." When our friend considers the hopes that may be reasonably entertained of the future triumphs of the Muse, he asks, "whether one can help spontaneously offering the invocation, that the blest saint, who, when on earth, 'blind, and with dangers compassed round,' sang in lofty measure man's lost estate, may let fall his mantle of resplendent light, glowing with celestial colors, upon some mortal, whom, in time to come, God may, perhaps, vouchsafe to send, to whom it may be given to sing in worthy numbers the glorious sequel of his noble song."

On the evening appointed for the first meeting of the season, the persons whom I have described were assembled at the fireside. A smile of happy greeting played upon every face, and each shook the hand of each with pleasant words of congratulation. A glowing ardor beamed from the face of the host, as he expressed his emotion at once more meeting his wel-

come guests, who reciprocated the feeling, and showed in their demeanor an easy, quiet freedom, alike removed from cold, ungracious reserve, and undue familiarity. The antiquary was in usual spirits, and seemed to be desirous of calling the general attention to a wonderful coin which had just been presented to him by a courteous friend, who had himself procured it of the enthusiastic and obliging dealer in classical antiquities at Civita Vecchia, the shelves of whose shop, where all strangers spend an entertaining hour, are covered with rusty looking vases, of all shapes, on which are imprinted figures of ancient deities, and groups representing various avocations of life, with little monuments and statutes in bronze, both old and modern, cases of curious cameos, pictures of ancient buildings, antique coins, strange seals, and guide-books for wondering travellers. Having compared the figure on the coin with an old bust, the antiquary has not the slightest doubt that it was struck in the days of Augustus. "You cannot imagine," said he, with intense zeal marking his countenance, "with what interest I regard an old coin. I gaze upon it, and fancy through how many hands it has passed since it came glittering from the mint. The miser has, perhaps, hoarded it among his treasures for long and tedious years, and, when he has died, and when his ill gotten and worse kept wealth has been dispersed, it may have been given to some forlorn beggar, who, seizing it with an eagerness, which staring famine only could inspire, has expressed his earnest, hasty thanks, and, by its timely aid, has prolonged his weary life. The thoughtless boy may have spent it for some vanity of

the moment, or one more careful may have kept it for a time, and thus foreshadowed the future prudent man. Virgil or Horace may have circulated it, and even the Imperial hand may have pressed it. When it has served its day, it may have lain concealed in some sly corner, and, thus, through various adventures, it has come down to our time,"—"and," said the clergyman, mildly finishing the sentence, "has at length found a safe and welcome home in the cabinet of an excellent antiquary, who derives a yearly interest from his investment in the associations connected with it."

Let the discussion about coins proceed, while I introduce a visitor, whose unostentatious entrance at this moment caused a thrill of pleasure. After saluting the company with a quiet bow, he took his familiar seat. He is a young nobleman of the vicinity, who esteems it a high privilege to visit on these occasions the house of the hospitable merchant, and to spend with him some of his best and happiest hours. The old hear him speak with pleasure, because he is so respectful to the teachings of experience, and the young listen with gladness to his discourse, because it is so full of the spirit and vivacity of youth. By the early death of his father, he has become the proprietor of the estate of the family, who have held it for a long period of time. He has a constant care that the honored place, where his fathers have lived and died, whose spirits seem yet to linger affectionately about it, as if to encourage the maintenance of the same strength of character, which has marked the race, shall suffer no wrong at his hands, or by his wild extravagance pass away to strangers. He is kind and

urbane towards all who are dependant upon him, and he regards them not as having less keen feelings than his, but as being affected like himself by smiles and frowns. The younger members of the family feel that they are not excluded from the patrimony by the haughtiness of an elder brother, but they either abide with him, or ever find a hearty fraternal welcome, and selectest happiness in calling to mind scenes and events as dear as the consciousness of life. His steadfast and mild expression, and his general demeanor show him to be one of those men of powerful but subdued impulses, who are always the most entertaining companions, because they are earnest without being beside themselves, and, being perfectly at ease, please people by their conversation without making them *nervous*. He is a pattern of free, discreet and graceful beneficence, and encourages every honest measure which promises sound, judicious reform, or just and reasonable conservatism in national affairs. The custom which invests the eldest son with the ancestral domain, beautiful in theory, but often painful and oppressive in practice, in his case increases faithfulness and the sense of responsibility as a Christian citizen. He has spent much of his time in the careful reading especially of the English authors, towards many of whom he has almost a filial esteem. He has enlarged his mind by travel, and gained a knowledge of men and of the world, and he has little of that insular feeling, as though nothing can be good which is not British, which sometimes disfigures the character of Englishmen.

The clergyman and the antiquary were eager in their discussion, and made many learned quotations

from the classics which I am painfully compelled to omit, not because I can for a moment doubt that they would be interesting to all my readers, but because, being very little conversant myself with the classics, I know not where to find the quotations, and am afraid to ask, lest my purpose should be suspected. The antiquary expended much eloquence upon the study of ancient coins, and, in the height of his enthusiasm, even suggested that it should be made a part of primary education, but he was interrupted by the merchant who remarked that he thought that money was studied too much already at the present day by old and young. The antiquary, with his usual energy, wished that he had said that, and then was silent.

"What are your impressions, Sir Edward, of the great Republic?" said the host, addressing the young nobleman. "I cannot answer very briefly so comprehensive a question," was the reply, "but I have no objection to state some of those that were most deeply made upon me during my recent visit to America. No one can spend even a short time in that country, without being persuaded that the same Almighty hand that has made England a garden of beauty, has extended the majestic rivers, lifted the high forests and mountains, and rolled the vast waterfalls of the new world; that humanity there as here is toiling, weeping, rejoicing, amiable or revengeful, humane or heartless, inspired by the same hopes, cast down by the same fears, excited by the same motives, as resolute or fearful in danger, as courageous or timid in death. I have come back more strongly attached to the English constitution, but feeling that in the broad land across the sea, is a nation, whose vast, undeveloped,

natural resources strike the stranger with awe. I have found persons in America more conscious than a visitor can be, of many defects, social, political and religious; and I have there experienced as courteous maintenance of different opinions, as ever at home. The Americans have unceasing enterprise, a fearless devotion to cherished purposes, a stern, invincible spirit of progress; they must act, now or never, are impatient, always moving, and wear anxious faces: they have generally little European grace and repose of character; but we never expect in a young man the easy dignity of age, and we should not look for it in a young nation.

I found there, among many reflecting men, a fear that instruction and good influences of every kind were not keeping pace with the growing extent and resources of the nation. I thought that I saw many evils, and the germs of many more in the common but pernicious fallacy, that the President of a Republic is the representative of the people. 'The powers that be, are ordained of God,' whether they be civil or religious, and one might as well declare that a pastor represents the people, over whom he holds spiritual jurisdiction, as that a civil ruler represents those, whom he is bound to govern in the fear of God, and according to established principles and laws. I was for a long time at a loss to understand how, under the influence of democracy, the writings of the Oxford divines should have taken a strong hold upon the minds of many thoughtful persons in America, but further reflection satisfied me, that it was owing in part, at least, to a consciousness of the want of conservative

elements in the state, and to a desire to supply the deficiency by exalting the prerogatives of the Church.

I was surprised to find that wherever the influence of the Puritans has extended in America, the proposition that the State should educate the people, which in England is a matter of serious dispute, is regarded as self-evident, and as not admitting a moment's question. Universal education is a great reliance of the judicious against democratic excesses, and the most enlightened parts of the country witness few of those wild and reckless movements which tend to anarchy. Indeed, an honorable conservatism as well as the most liberal policy demand every where and at all times the education of the people, for the national welfare can have no stronger safeguard than this. A thousand armies cannot shake the stability of a nation, whose people enjoy the means of mental, moral and religious culture, and a thousand armies cannot save a nation whose people are without instruction."

"But, did you find any thing old in America?" inquired the antiquary. "I should fear going myself to that country, lest every thing should be so new that I should be discontented and unhappy." "Yes, Mr. Pastly," answered Sir Edward, "I saw old rivers, that have flowed for thousands of years in their appointed channels; and old mountains, that still rise as majestically as when they first peered above the flood of waters. The same sun that illumined the garden of Eden lighted my daily path; the same moon that then walked in brightness made the night serene and beautiful; and the same stars that in the beginning were set in the firmament poured their calm radiance over me. Nature is older than art, and when I look

upon her enduring tokens that have survived the decay of nations, and the changes of mankind, I confess that associations more numerous and more interesting crowd upon my mind, than when I gaze upon the ruins of an ancient castle, or walk the streets of a deserted city. Ages of men may have lived upon the borders of some mighty stream, and left behind a few scattered memorials of their career, which, when discovered in later time, excite curious wonder; and still the stream flows on unchangingly, as when it first sought its devious way through low, wide plains and valleys; the only monuments of various races are lofty groves, and in some lonely retreats, the ear is startled by the rippling of the waves and the moaning of winds through aisles of the forest, where man once struggled with man for brief supremacy, or offered his rude worship to the lights of heaven."

"Excuse my freedom," interposed the antiquary, "but I think, Sir Edward, that you must have been among those dreamers who, I hear, live in America. You have become a little flighty since your transatlantic excursion."

Have patience, my readers, and the account, thus abruptly closed, of the evening's conversation, shall be resumed, when next we meet. Doubt not that I shall faithfully report the contributions of our friends to the common pleasure and profit, at their successive entertainments. May you have peace, happiness and all prosperity. Thus ends my salutation.

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